
THE ART OF RIGHT LIVING

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TORONTO, CANADA

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It is generally conceded that the majority of Europeans and Americans take more food than is necessary to keep the body in a healthy condition, and it is not unreasonable to think that a gentle reminder of this fact from time to time may be provocative of some little good. If it be granted, as Sir Frederick Treves has remarked, that ignorance and folly are the two essential factors in producing disease, then to disseminate knowledge and to condemn follies are the most important duties of a medical practitioner, and the self-evident fact may be here stated that so long as gluttony and inebriety exist in greater or less forms so long will it be necessary for the doctor to administer drugs to overcome the ill effects of these excesses. But the question of the layman always is, What is excess? and the answer to this must usually rest with the physician, for what may be an excess for one man may not be for another, what may be sufficient for one period of life may be insufficient for another, or what may be even suitable for to-day may not be for to-morrow, so that it will be seen that our responsibilities in giving advice as to diet are very great.

The late Sir Andrew Clarke, of London,

was, on one occasion, observed by his patient to be writing a very lengthy prescription, as he thought, for medicine; his anxiety was, however, somewhat relieved when he learned that the writing was chiefly directions as to diet.

In considering special forms of diet one might as well commence at the beginning of life, when the conditions ought to be more or less proper. It may, I think, be granted that at this period of life, when the child is nursing, one does not often find a dilated stomach, for to produce this abnormal condition time is essential, so that the infant that is in the habit of taking too much food regurgitates the excess shortly after; hence if the mother's milk is good, we ought to have a healthy infant, as far as feeding can make it so, for there can be no ill effects from overfeeding. As soon, however, as the child's nursing days are over, then comes the possibility of excess in food, for the stomach in children, even if it be not dilated, has generally the power of retaining a greater quantity than is sufficient for the building of the tissues, the heat of the body, and the necessary energy—one or all kinds of food may be taken somewhat in excess.

If the child is very active and lives largely in the open air, having normal excretory organs, then it will be proper for him to live on a diet representing in fair proportions the proteids, fats, and carbohydrates. If

the same boy a little later on be placed in an office where he gets little exercise in the open air, we must not restrict any one kind of food, but rather the quantity of all, if we wish to keep him in good health. If at the age of twenty-five years, when he has attained his stature, he is still an office man without chance of much exercise, then it is our duty to put a check on the quantity of his proteids, for excess in this element of food is largely responsible for very many ills, and a due observance of the proper quantity will have a material influence on his well-being throughout life. As only broad principles can be stated in this short paper, it may be said that the less energetic and active in physical efforts a man is, the less proteids he will require; but the converse will not hold absolutely good, for when the appetite is sharpened by much muscular exercise the individual will, in the great majority of cases, partake too freely of meats and other proteids—that is, more than is necessary to replace the tissues destroyed. Then when excess commences, dilatation of the stomach follows as a natural result, and this leads to the possibility of greater and greater excesses, so that if no curb be placed on the appetite, gluttony in a greater or less degree becomes the rule of life.

When the system is constantly overloaded and the excretory organs taxed to their

utmost, day after day and year after year, we cannot look for or expect to find a healthy body or a buoyant disposition, but, on the contrary, lethargy and indisposition will be the marked characteristics.

It must not be forgotten that the constant overloading will certainly be harmful to the kidneys and other excretory organs, for in time interstitial changes will surely take place, and if some acute disease such as pneumonia does not intervene and carry off our patient, we will, at any rate, have a life much shortened by the gradual deposit of excretory salts in the tissues throughout the body. The man who ought to be in the prime of life will become prematurely aged, and it is then too late to effect more than an amelioration of his troublesome symptoms.

If the physician cannot control the quantity of his patient's diet, he can very often induce him to substitute the carbohydrates for his proteids, and in this way accomplish something. There will be no danger of not getting a sufficiency of tissue-building food, especially if a few beans and peas be occasionally put on his diet list.

Up to the present I have assumed that a man has started in the world with normal excretory organs, but it must be remembered that there is a large class of people who have commenced life with defective powers of excretion, their parents probably


not having lived an abstemious life, or some form of malnutrition having been present in the child while *in utero*; hence we find all kinds of dyspeptic disturbances from early life, and to speak broadly these young people belong to the class of those who cannot tolerate with impunity much proteids.

Up to the age of maturity they will, of course, require a certain amount, and this amount will depend upon their different capacities for excretion. This large class as a rule live abstemious lives, *nolens volens*, being compelled to, because slight excesses will throw them off duty for a day or more; they very early in life get their severe lessons, and there is no danger with these of dilated stomachs. They sometimes envy their friends or neighbors, who eat twice as much as they can; however, they get along fairly well if they reduce the proteids and fats to a minimum and lead out-of-door lives.

There is another large number who suffer from malnutrition from birth, and although they may have fair excretory organs the power of assimilating food is impaired. They are lacking in vitality generally, and frequently too tired to eat a good meal. Tuberculosis in some form is likely to make its appearance among them provided a forced diet with some artificial digestive be not adopted. Here we find the proteids of the greatest value, but unfortunately they

are frequently given to the almost entire exclusion of the other elements, hence energy is impaired or lost, and with it the power of properly assimilating food, so that a mixed diet with an abundance of proteids ought to be strongly insisted on.

The last large class of patients that I will mention consists of all those who are past the active period of life, and here it may be stated that many lives are shortened through intended kindness of friends and neighbors. The forcing of animal broths, jellied meats, and other proteids on the aged and infirm is, to say the least, not conducive to their health and strength. Let elderly patients be fed largely on the carbohydrates and fats, and they will have more power to help themselves, less disturbances of the stomach and bowels, clearer mental capacity, more cheerful dispositions, and an all-round greater comfort.



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